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# UNH Ocean Workshop Engages Teachers To Inspire The Next Generation

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June 29, 2005

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**Editors: Participants in the workshop will be available for interviews on Friday, July 1, at Holloway Commons on the UNH campus in Durham. Visiting teachers will give presentations from 9 a.m. to noon.**

DURHAM, N.H. – In an effort to “jump-start” teachers and ultimately engage their students in the scientific mysteries of the deep blue sea, the University of New Hampshire’s Coastal Ocean Observing Center and the Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System are hosting 20 elementary, middle, and high school teachers from around the country for five days of intensive oceanographic study.

Hosted by UNH, the workshop, titled “Seasons in the Sea: Understanding Change in the Gulf of Maine Through Buoys, Boats, and Satellites,” runs through Friday, July 1. The workshop, which includes a scientific cruise in the Gulf of Maine, will give educators tools they can take back to their classrooms where, using real-time data transmitted via the Internet from a series of high-tech buoys bobbing about in the Gulf of Maine, they will be able to take their students on a virtual field trip to Casco Bay, the Scotian Shelf or any of the other eight areas populated with buoys. The buoys gauge conditions both above and below the sea surface – from air temperature and visibility to wave height, salinity, temperature, turbidity, etc.

“By training these teachers using state-of-the-art oceanographic tools and methods, we hope to eventually reach students and bring them into the field, or into the sciences in general,” says Amy Holt Cline, education and outreach coordinator for the Coastal Ocean Observing Center. “I think teachers are coming here because they need a jump-start. We hope to be the catalyst for that and send them back excited so they can provide new materials that will, hopefully, energize their classrooms.”

The key to success is context, Cline says. “In the classroom, if a teacher doesn’t provide enough context for ‘why do we care, why does this matter?’, the lesson will flop.” The real-time data helps give it all a real-world context.

UNH oceanographer Ru Morrison, who is working with the teachers, says that context also is being provided by an increasing emphasis on coastal ocean observing in an effort to better understand and manage our oceans, which have been characterized as being in trouble by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

“Ocean observing, after the Ocean Commission Report and other efforts that have brought it into focus, is becoming very important – the government is set to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in the coming years,” Morrison says. (The commission, a panel of experts, including Andrew Rosenberg of UNH, was established by the White House and charged with providing recommendations for a new, coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policy. The commission’s report was released last September. For more information, visit <http://www.oceancommission.gov>.)

The workshop theme, “Seasons of the Sea,” was chosen to emphasize the fact that the ocean, like its terrestrial/atmospheric counterpart, is a highly dynamic, complex, and seasonably variable ecosystem and the “seasons” that occur underwater due to changing levels of nutrients, salinity, temperature, etc. are what make or break already struggling fish stocks and cause things like red tide, which is at levels not seen since the 1970s.

Of the workshop and its goals Cline says, “For teachers, this provides a direct link to the research and researchers and will provide a better understanding of what we know about the science and a whole lot about what we don’t know – something I believe is really exciting for teachers to take back to their kids. The way science is often presented, students think we already know everything, but everything we know now is based on someone asking a question before. We want teachers to go back and take the wonder of these questions to their students.”

For more information, visit: <http://www.cooa.unh.edu/workshop2005.html> or <http://www.gomoos.org/>.